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ABSTRACT

Portrayal of racial minorities in textbooks is discussed and the practice of textbook publishers in their treatment of the roles of minorities during the 1960s to the present is traced. America transmits the dominant ideals and values of its culture to students through textbooks. Until the 1960s, racial minorities were generally ignored by writers and publishers of textbooks. Consequently, millions of American youth passed through schools without having read much about African Americans, American Indians, or Puerto Ricans. The social revolution during the 1960s encouraged publishers to venture into publishing textbooks that portrayed minorities fairly, but special editions of standard textbooks tailored to meet regional biases were still being produced. A 1975 study by the American Jewish Committee focused a year-long analysis on African Americans, Mexican Americans, and native Americans and concluded that racism can still be found in social studies textbooks. Trade book publishers have been quick to realize the huge profits in minority themes and have often published or reprinted books of questionable quality. Minority publishing is improving, however, partly through the encouragement of groups such as the Council on Interracial Books for Children. Educators, textbook writers, publishers, parents, and other interested persons must not become complacent given moderate gains. They must encourage minority writers and publishing houses to select quality minority educational materials. (Author/DB)

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TRENDS IN PUBLISHING FOR ETHNIC STUDIES: AFRO AMERICANS, NATIVE AMERICAN AND SPANISH SPEAKING:

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Societies have their own way of transmitting the dominant ideals and values of their culture. America, just as other literate societies transmits its own culture values basically through textbooks. It was David Riesman in his classic work, The Lonely Crowd, who observed that people can have their social values influenced and reinforced through the printed word. I doubt if there is disagreement this morning with Riesman.

Most of America's racial minorities have had to struggle for more than their physical survival. Until about a decade ago they were virtually non-persons as far as writers and publishers of textbooks were concerned. If we pause to think about it millions of American youth have passed through our public and private schools without having read or heard very little, if anything, about Afro-Americans, American Indians, or Puerto Ricans. Certainly this could be said about other minorities as well. In some cases this oversight has been intentional, while in others it is the result of neglect. Dr. Charles Wesley, a noted historian, has stated:

> History, read and taught, in the schools, should not be the story of people of one color with the neglect and omission of the men and women of another race or color. When a past of the people, a minority as a group, has been neglected or given subordinate place, history for a truthful presentation should be reconstructed and not neglected, in the interest of good human relations.[1]

A quick look backward will show us that the majority of our social studies textbooks were from an Anglo-Saxon point of view. Caucasians were most always depicted as "intelligent", "brave", "industrious",

"of good stature, shape, and complexion." In the early past of this century minorities were simply left out in most cases.

If mentioned, they were stereotyped. Afro-Americans were depicted as contented with slavery, the steamboat was hooting around the bend, God was in heaven, and all was right with the world. It has only been during the last decade that school children heard of such rebellion leaders as Demark Vesey, Nat Turner, or Frederick Douglas, or Sojurner Truth.

In the case of Native Americans, Rey Mickinock, an Objibway Indian, noted that his people very early in history were shown as ignorant, cruel savages, who were ungodly.

The task of degrading minorities was so complete that they believed themselves inferior. One writer has aptly described the situation as "cultural lobotomy."

One cannot talk about portrayal of racial minorities in textbooks without recognizing the impact of the social revolution in this country during the 1960's. Some publishers were encouraged to venture into publishing textbooks that were honest and depicted minorities fairly. However, "special" editions of what might be considered as standard textbooks were still being published three years ago. Publishers were still tailoring their materials to meet regional biases. According to Jack Abromowitz in an article in Social Education, tailoring of special editions "is, of course, a shady part of the publishing business and companies that are involved in the practice are unwilling to carry the full burden of blame. They tend to stress that they are only meeting the requirements of the districts they service..."[2]

By 1968, a few books did refer to minority achievements, and also mentioned conflict, peaceful resistence to discrimination and deliberate acts of discrimination. However, I am inclined to agree with Dr. James Banks who feels that the changes have not necessarily been adequate for today's educational needs. The facts of racial violence are still muted; the achievements of a few minorities are selectively mentioned and the plight of the majority of Afro-Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, or Chicanos is not discussed.

Yes, things have certainly improved, from the day just a few years ago when Follett Publishing Co. prepared what was probably the first integrated textbooks for the Detroit schools. Integration in the early sixties for this publisher and many educators was merely painting white faces brown or black. There was no change in the contents.

In Washington, D.C., a textbook by Cole and Montgomery used in the late sixties entitled, High School Sociology, discussed the plight of the Native American. In a discussion of denial of privileges against Native American it stated the following: "...For a long time the Indians of some states were denied voting privileges which non-Indians had demanded earlier..." [3]

Regarding segregation it said: "The system of segregation of Indians on reservations grew out of prejudices even though many whites held that reservations were necessary for the protection of the Indians..."

This same textbook, I should mention, and to digress for a second, discussed aggression and conflict with this typical statement: "In Hitler's Germany the Jews had their property taken and some were put to

death..." The authors were talking about six million Jews when they used "some"!

The danger in all of this was to reinforce the negative and confuse the racial attitudes children automatically bring to school from home environments. Hopefully, this practice has ceased in 1976. Or has it?

Juel Janis[4] in a thorough study noted that some school systems found it necessary to prepare supplements to the study of Afro-Americans, and Native Americans. A study of the guides showed that there were divergent ideas on exactly what is Afro-American history or Native American history. One approach assumes that these histories should be presented in terms of Afro American, Indian or Spanish speaking heroes or contributions. The other, sees the need to deal with heroes and contributions but along with the psychological or social aspects of intercultural relations in American society.

Some of these early attempts to correct the oversights or wilful neglect of textbooks were feeble; others were outstanding. The quality of the guides were influenced by sincerity, financial resources, availability of resource materials, time and skill in research and writing. Despite weaknesses these early supplements by school districts proved to be the basis for some changes in textbooks.

But let us turn back to the question of whether the textbook situation for ethnic studies has changed.

In a recent study[5] sponsored by the American Jewish Committee in 1975 it was concluded that many textbooks in this country today continue to portray a principally Anglo-Saxon, Protestant account of America's past and present, while neglecting, in many cases, the role and accomplishments of minority groups. The study focused its year long analysis on Afro-American, Mexican-Americans and native Americans.

It was revealed that the slant toward racism can still be found in social studies textbooks today, although they are a great improvement over texts a few years ago.

The author of the Report, Dr. Richard L. Simms, Professor of Education at North Texas State University, stated:

> Racism in the textbooks reviewed for this study was of two kinds: commission and omission. The first encompasses stereotyping, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, and the use of prejudiced statements or caricatures that demean minorities. This variety of textbook bias is the most blantant, and therefore, the simplest to spot. The second form is much more subtle and insidious, being rooted in what writers leave out. This may be attributed to lack of scholarly integrity, lack of sensitivity and awareness, political demands made on textbook writers, or a continuation of our Eurocentric view of history to the exclusion of others.[6]

The following are stereotypes found in textbooks as late as 1974-75. Compare these direct quotes with earlier depictions of minorities:

> "Mexican-Americans enjoy owning cars and refrigerators, but they think that things like enjoying good time with one's friends and family are more important."

Note: What are the authors doing here? Complimenting Mexican-American for a less materialistic concept of life or is this a "put down" suggesting no initiative or leadership?

> "The Man who discovered America was an Italian sailor, Christopher Columbus."

Note: There was estimated to be 20 million Indians when Columbus arrived at the Shores of America.

An interesting point here is that there is virtually nothing said about Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans. They too have been written out of school textbooks.

Trade Book Publishers

It did not take trade book publishers long to realize that huge profits were in minority themes. It was the sudden availability of Federal funds for use by libraries and schools under Titles I and II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The availability of government funding provided encouragement to publishers to create books and educational materials unparalleled in the history of publishing.

Unscrupulous publishers dug out of their backlists hundreds of low quality books that could quality for school and library purchase. The said part of this story is that libraries and schools bought these so-called "relevant" books.

In the adult field, quick money was available in reprinting of old books on Afro-American and Native Americans. New companies specializing in reprinting sprang up over night.

Part of the problem was there just were not enough books written by Afro-Americans, Native Americans or Puerto Ricans, to give honesty and authenticity.

With time there has been change in the quality of books being published and the complexion of the publishing companies. Looking at the groups that are the subject of this paper we find that there have been some quantum jumps in the improvement of trade books concerned with Afro-Americans.

Some of the early successes are Lorenz Graham's books, North Town South Town and Whose Town?; Frank Bonham's Durango Street; Gwen Brooks' Bronzerville Boys and Girls; Ezra John Keat's The Snowy Day; Kristin Hunter's The Soul Brother and Sister Lou; and Julius Lester's To Be A Slave.

Ann Petry's Harriet Tubman. Among other works more recently are those by June Jordon, Toni Cade, Nikki Giovanni, Virginia Hamilton, Louis Meriwether, and John Steptoe, Ernest Gaines and Tom Feelings. It should be noted that all of the authors mentioned above are Afro-Americans, except two.

Dorothy Broderick writing about the state of affairs regarding books about Native Americans noted that "whether you start with where we are and go back in history, or begin with history and come up to date, either beginning will be depressing and remain so." [7]

Rey Mickinock states that if persons wish to get a sincere picture of life of the Native American since 1609 let them begin with Deloria's Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties, Custer Died for Your Sins, and Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee; Van Every's The Disinherited; Mary Walker's Walk In My Moccasins; Dan Cushman's Stay Away Joe or Steiner's The New Indians.

Mary Byler, who is a Cherokee and editor of Indian Affairs, feels that there are today too many trade books featuring painted, whooping, befeathered Native Americans, closing in on too many forts, maliciously attacking "peaceful" settlers. There are too many books with little children running around with bows and arrows, and playing in teepees. Most books, of the hundreds published and available in libraries and bookstores are parodies. There have been some strides made in the quality of books on the Native American. However, the best seem to be those written by Native Americans.

Raymond J. Rodrigues noted two years ago that one must search long and hard for the smallest part of Chicano literature. Significant works are by Abelardo Delgado, Sabine Ulibarrio, Octavio Romano, Luis F. Hernandez, Romon E. Ruiz, George Sanchez.

Non Chicano works worth noting are Frank Bonham's Viva Chicano, William Cox's Chicano Cruz, Frank Water's People of the Valley, Marcella Trujillo's stories, essays and pems by Mexican-Americans entitled, There Is Something New Under the Sun. Ray Rodrigues stated in his study that "through stereotypes in the literature and previously limited publishing opportunities, a myth developed" about the Chicano. Hopefully this is changing.

Minority Publishing

There are some new voices in publishing. Minority publishing is beginning to take off. Those of us who have been observant of trends in the print media know that no one publisher of size can or will publish trade books on everything of importance to various segments of society today. Over the past five years there have emerged small specialized publishing houses. Among such new houses are a number of Afro-American, Chicano, and Native American publishers. One should note that there are also Armedian, Hungarian, Jewish, Scandanavian publishers in this country. So the establishment of these publishing houses already has a precedent.

Representing Afro-American ownership are Emerson Hall Publishers, Third Press, Black Academy Press, Broadside Press, Drum and Spear Press, Johnson Publishing Co., Buckingham Learning Corp., Afro-Am Publishing, Blyden Press, and Third World Press.

Some of the Spanish-Speaking presses (not necessarily publishing in Spanish) are Barrio Publishing, Mictla Publications, Ancient City Press, Quinto Sol and Totinem Publications.

There is the Indian Historian Press which is 15 years old. I believe the statement by Rupert Costo, the publisher of Indian Historian

Press sums up the need and feelings of minority publishers:

> We believe that there is room for a Native American publishing business. We found it most difficult to get into the business and find it increasingly so. We found also that established publishers didn't want us in the business.[8]

Costo further noted that when the large publishers saw the national interest in Native Americans "what emerged was some more misinterpretation much more sophisticated than were the others previously evaluated. Degrading statements concerning Indian lifeways persist."

Much of the encouragement of minority publishing has been from the Council on Interracial Books For Children. The Council was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in New York in 1965. Over the past decade it has awarded prizes and arranged publishing contracts for minority authors and illustrators of manuscripts for young readers.

If this paper were prepared ten years ago the report would indeed be dismal regarding the state of affairs for materials for Afro-Americans, Native Americans and the Spanish Speaking. There has been improvement in both textbook materials and trade books. The changes have been slow for textbooks. The recent study of textbooks points to the need for teachers and librarians to have other teaching materials in addition to or in lieu of textbooks.

Educators, textbook writers and publishers, parents and others must not be moved to complacency by moderate gains. Educational materials must increasingly emphasize the true roles minorites have played and are playing in our pluralistic society. But above all they must be depicted truthfully in all aspects of their lives.

The progress made in producing quality trade books is due in a large measure to minority writers writing about themselves. Also, the minority publishing houses must be encouraged by buying their works. Many of these minority publishers have had difficulty in getting their works reviewed in the mainstream educational journals where librarians get information on new books.

As we all know the key to having a successful publication is having positive reviews of the work. If you want to "kill" a publication all you have to do is deny it exposure through the reviewing media and professional journals. We select and use educational materials in our work and therefore have the responsibility to provide quality materials. Until we insist on quality writing and publishing we will never get it.

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